

Message Text

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ORIGIN MBFR-03

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TO USMISSION NATO IMMEDIATE

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TAGS: PARM, NATO

SUBJECT: UK PAPER ON SOVIET ATTITUDES

REF: USNATO 3823

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1. FOLLOWING ARE WASHINGTON'S COMMENTS ON THE UK PAPER ON

SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD MBFR FOR USE BY MISSION IN DISCUSSION SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 21. WE DISAGREE WITH CERTAIN ASPECTS OF UK PAPER AND BELIEVE IT UNDESIRABLE TO GET INTO CONTROVERSY OVER SO SPECULATIVE A SUBJECT. BEGIN FYI: WE PARTICULARLY WISH TO AVOID A WASTEFUL EFFORT TO ARRIVE AT AN AGREED ALLIED ASSESSMENT OF SOVIET POSITION, AND TENDENCIES IN THIS DIRECTION SHOULD BE RESISTED. END FYI. FOR THIS REASON WE DO NOT BELIEVE NATO SHOULD ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP THIS PAPER FURTHER. YOU MAY WISH TO COMMENT SPECIFICALLY AS FOLLOWS:

2. WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE UK FOR PROVIDING A PAPER WHICH DOES A USEFUL JOB OF IDENTIFYING MANY OF THE LINES OF ARGUMENT WHICH THE SOVIETS ARE LIKELY TO TAKE, AT LEAST INITIALLY, IN THE MBFR NEGOTIATIONS. WE WOULD AGREE WITH THE UK THAT THE EAST CAN BE EXPECTED TO ATTEMPT TO REBUT WESTERN ARGUMENTS ABOUT THE ASYMMETRIES WHICH CONCERN US. WE ALSO BELIEVE THE UK PREDICTION THAT THE SOVIETS MIGHT INITIALLY ADVOCATE REDUCTIONS EQUAL IN ABSOLUTE TERMS IS PLAUSIBLE.

3. AS A GENERAL POINT, WE COULD NOT ACCEPT THE UNQUALIFIED CHARACTERIZATION OF THE INITIAL MBFR TALKS AS "A SUCCESS" FOR THE SOVIETS OR AS HAVING GIVEN THE SOVIETS "MORE OR LESS" WHAT THEY WANTED WITH REGARD TO HUNGARY. THE TALKS AS A WHOLE MET AGREED ALLIED OBJECTIVES SET FORTH IN THE GAP PAPER. WITH SPECIFIC REGARD TO HUNGARY, THE AD HOC GROUP REPORT TO THE COUNCIL ON THE VIENNA TALKS ESTIMATES THAT THE SOVIETS OBTAINED LESS THAN THEY WANTED, SINCE THE WEST ACHIEVED THE OBJECTIVE OF BRINGING THE EAST TO CONCEDE THAT FORCES IN HUNGARY COULD BE ADDRESSED IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. FURTHERMORE, WE WOULD RESIST ANY INFERENCES THAT ALLIES HAVE RELINQUISHED CONCEPT OF "BALANCED" IN EAST-WEST DISCUSSIONS AS BOTH VIENNA AND NIXON-BREZHNEV COMMUNIQUE ACKNOWLEDGE CONCEPTS UNDERLYING THIS PROPOSAL.

4. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF FURTHER INDIVIDUAL POINTS ON WHICH WE WOULD DIFFER WITH THE UK PAPER. BUT IT IS PROBABLY NOT PROFITABLE TO DEAL WITH EACH NUANCE OF ASSESSMENT OR TO ATTEMPT A COMMON EVALUATION ON SO SPECULATIVE A SUBJECT

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AS SOVIET INTENTIONS. IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, WE FOUND THE PAPER RATHER PESSIMISTIC IN ITS FORECASTS. IT SEEMS TO US THAT WESTERN EXPERTS HAVE SOMETIMES UNDERESTIMATED THE FACTORS THAT HAVE MADE IT EXPEDIENT FOR THE SOVIETS TO DISPLAY FLEXIBILITY IN FOREIGN POLICY AS IT HAS DEVELOPED OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS. MANY OF US ONCE THOUGHT THAT THE USSR WOULD NEVER AGREE TO MBFR TALKS AT ALL, JUST AS MANY THOUGHT AGREEMENTS ON BERLIN OR SALT IMPROBABLE.

5. THE BRITISH PAPER ALSO SEEMS NOT TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF A CERTAIN DEGREE OF INCREASING SALIENCE OF MBFR IN SOVIET DETENTE POLICY WHICH MAY PROVE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE WEST. TRUE, MBFR DID CLEARLY TAKE SECOND PLACE TO CSCE IN SOVIET POLICY SEVERAL YEARS AGO. BUT THERE HAS BEEN SOME MOVEMENT IN THIS REGARD. AS THE UK PAPER NOTES, THE SOVIETS HAVE FINALLY COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO ENTER INTO TALKS ON THE SUBJECT, AND SOVIET PUBLICISTS HAVE EVEN BEGUN TO CLAIM THAT IT ORIGINALLY WAS THE USSR'S INITIATIVE. COMMUNIQUE OF VISITS AMONG POLITICAL LEADERS OF COMMUNIST COUNTRIES ATTEST A TENDENCY TO ASCRIBE GREATER IMPORTANCE TO MBFR AND PUBLICLY DEMONSTRATE CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF PERSONAL COMMITMENT ON THE PART OF THOSE LEADERS TO THE ENTERPRISE. WE BELIEVE THAT THERE MAY BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE WEST TO PUSH THIS TREND ALONG AND TO BRING THE SOVIETS TO ACCEPT THE IDEA THAT THE WEST WILL TAKE SOVIET BEHAVIOR IN MBFR AS A VALID TEST OF THEIR SERIOUSNESS IN DETENTE. THE UK PAPER DOES SEEM TO US TO UNDERRATE SOVIET INTEREST IN IMPROVED ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE WEST, WHICH SHOULD PROVIDE SOME INCENTIVE FOR POSITIVE ACTIONS IN OTHER FIELDS.

6. HOWEVER, WE WISH TO STRESS THAT WE ARE NOT DOGMATIC ABOUT THESE VIEWS. TO THE CONTRARY. WE EXPECT VERY TOUGH NEGOTIATION WITH THE SOVIETS. BUT WE WOULD ARGUE THAT THE QUESTION OF WHAT WILL OR WILL NOT ULTIMATELY PROVE TO BE NEGOTIABLE WITH THEM CAN ONLY BE DETERMINED BY ACTUAL EXPERIENCE. ROGERS

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